
GOLD COAST PHARMACY

2419-2435 BISCAYNE BOULEVARD

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PRESERVATION OFFICER
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE
GOLD COAST PHARMACY
AS A HISTORIC SITE

Prepared by Ellen J. Uguccioni for
Janus Research, Consultant

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton, Preservation Officer

Passed and
Adopted on _____

Resolution No. _____

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Names:

Gold Coast Pharmacy

Current Name:

None

Location:

2419-2435 Biscayne Boulevard
Miami, Florida

Present Owners:

A. Sokol (PR), J. Schlosberg Jr. and Lawrence Scholsberg Tr. et al
1515 Ringling Boulevard
Sarasota, FL 34236

Present Use:

Commercial/Residential

Zoning District:

C-1, with and SD-20 Overlay

Tax Folio Number:

01-3230-023-0450

Boundary Description:

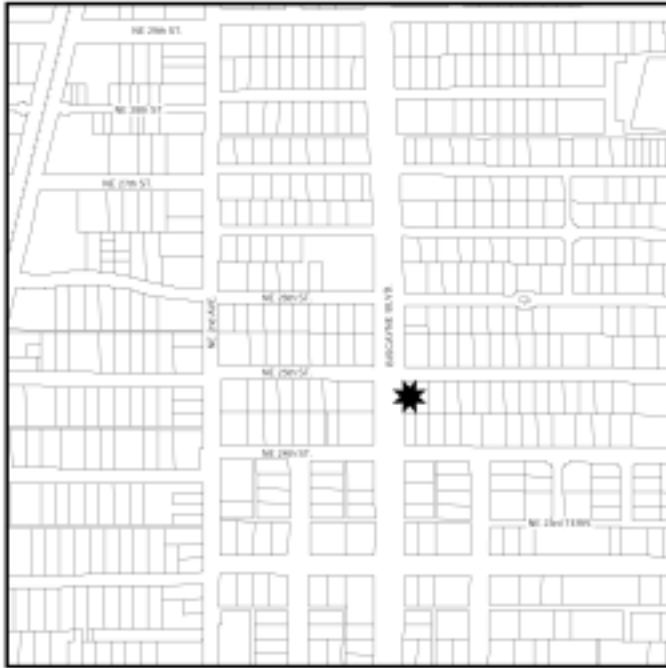
Lot 14 less the westerly 15 feet of Block 4 of the plat of BIRD'S SUBDIVISION, as recorded in Plat Book 4 at Page 82, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Classification:

Historic Site

GOLD COAST PHARMACY

2419-2435 BISCAYNE BOULEVARD



location



site plan

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific Dates:

1926

Architects:

C. C. Weber and Alexander D. Lewis

Builder/Contractor:

Harrison Construction Company

Statement of Significance:

The Gold Coast Pharmacy is significant for its historical associations with the early efforts of the Biscayne Boulevard Company to establish a world-class shopping district in the heart of Miami during a time of nationwide depression. Announced in September 1926, this was the first new building constructed by the Biscayne Boulevard Company. This block-long, extremely narrow building is particularly distinctive for its design. The architects have created an impression of a series of buildings reminiscent of a medieval townscape. The Gold Coast Pharmacy is an exemplary representative of the range of interpretations within the Mediterranean Revival design vocabulary. Further, the building was designed by the architectural team that devised the theme for the boulevard and set the standard for others to emulate.

Florida's Land Boom reached its zenith in 1925 and created new cities across South Florida. Infrastructure improvements, and particularly roadways, could barely keep up with demand. In Miami, there was no adequate stretch of pavement that would lead commuters from Downtown to new cities like Miami Shores to the north.

The developers of Miami Shores, Hugh Anderson and Roy C. Wright, were instrumental in the creation of Biscayne Boulevard. They organized the Shoreland Company and, in December 1924, began selling lots in Miami Shores. To further their development, they envisioned a wide thoroughfare that would link downtown Miami with Miami Shores. To construct a roadway this grand was a monumental task, as its course ran through both improved and unimproved sections of the city, and it required millions of dollars to complete. During the Boulevard's construction, 85 buildings were demolished, at least 12 houses were moved to new locations, and several houses were cut in half, or had their front porches removed.

The Shoreland Company was unable to complete the work and, in 1926, was bought out by Henry Phipps of the U.S. Steel Corporation. The Phipps family formed the Biscayne Boulevard Company, later known as Bessemer Properties, and completed construction of the Boulevard. They also purchased most of the property fronting on Biscayne Boulevard between NE 13th Street and NE 40th Street, with the intention of making it the premier shopping area in Miami. Biscayne Boulevard was opened to automobile traffic in March 1927. When the Company deeded the right-of-way to the City of Miami, the property was said to be worth \$3.6 million.

Biscayne Boulevard was touted as “the Fifth Avenue of the South,” and by 1930 major retailers built significant stores on Biscayne Boulevard between NE 13th Street and NE 16th Street. They included Burdines Department Store, the Sears, Roebuck Building and the Shrine Building.

The Gold Coast Pharmacy building, completed in 1926 just before the disastrous economic downturn, was the prototype for the development envisioned by the developers of Biscayne Boulevard. It was no surprise that Mediterranean Revival architecture was chosen as the theme for the boulevard, as developers Anderson and Wright dubbed their Miami Shores community “America’s Mediterranean.” The Gold Coast Pharmacy represents the low scale, close-to-the-street combination of retail and residential use that was to be featured along much of the boulevard.

There were seven retail storefronts in the building. In addition to the Gold Coast Pharmacy, over the years the building has housed the Biscayne Radio Company, Cleveland’s Pharmacy, Scheibler’s Pharmacy and the Boulevard Grocery and Market.

The term “Mediterranean Revival” is today the widely accepted description for the combination of elements inspired by Spanish, Italian and North African prototypes. The hallmarks of the style include masonry construction with broad areas of uninterrupted surfaces covered with stucco that is frequently textured; cast stone or concrete ornament typically reserved for the embellishment of windows and doorways; a combination of roof slopes including flat, gabled and sometimes hipped; the use of arcades, loggias, and colonnades to provide sheltering, yet open areas; the juxtaposition of one and multiple stories; the use of towers, particularly at the corners; clay barrel tile roofing; wrought iron accent grilles or gates; wooden balconets and outrigger beams; cast concrete applied ornament; and plan shapes that create courtyard spaces.

Although the building has been modified by the replacement of its original windows, the insensitive remodeling of some of the storefronts and the replacement of the original Mission roofing tiles with asphalt shingles, the Gold Coast Pharmacy’s form and design are still conveyed to represent an important reminder of the extraordinary Mediterranean Revival plans envisioned for Biscayne Boulevard.

The Gold Coast Pharmacy illustrates a mixed-use approach to urban living that is emulated today for its success in energizing previously decaying areas in center cities. The mixed-use approach, which provides for living, working and shopping all in the same area, is not a new concept. For Biscayne Boulevard, however, it was realized on a grand scale and with great attention to harmony of style, landscape, and pedestrian amenities.

In another insightful planning principal, the Biscayne Boulevard buildings were to have their parking areas located in the rear. The result was a pleasing and continuous row of distinguished building elevations, and allowed for landscaping and seating areas that embellished the street and made walking a pleasant experience.

In a promotional brochure published in 1930, the Biscayne Boulevard Company said this:

Biscayne Boulevard Shopping Center is NEW. The street itself is new.... Built according to the standards of the new merchandising age...an impressive group of new buildings house the many firms which today, are changing the habits of thousands of shoppers...influencing them to dodge the narrow one-way streets and inadequate parking facilities of the old business section and to enjoy the comforts afforded by the completion of this magnificent new street. It is the one location that can furnish the convenience of proper and adequate parking space due to the provision by the Biscayne Boulevard Company for parking in the rear of the Boulevard buildings.

C. C. Weber and Alexander Lewis designed the building. This team is responsible for many of the buildings constructed for the Biscayne Boulevard Company between 1926 and 1928. Weber and Lewis were particularly adept at Mediterranean Revival design, the favored theme of Biscayne Boulevard until 1930 when Art Deco designs became the preferred style.

Alexander Lewis' office was located in Buena Vista and he designed such important buildings as the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company on Flagler Street and the Sterling Building on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach.

For Biscayne Boulevard the team designed the Nolan-Peeler Motors Building at 2044 Biscayne Boulevard in 1928 (demolished); the Algonquin Apartments (by attribution) at 1819-1825 Biscayne Boulevard in 1924 (demolished); the addition to the Priscilla Apartments (demolished) at 1845 Biscayne Boulevard in 1925 (Addition, 1927); and the addition to the Wolpert Apartments at 2500-2512 Biscayne Boulevard in 1924 (Addition 1927).

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

As stated above, the Gold Coast Pharmacy has significance in the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Miami; possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association; and is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

3. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economical, or social trends of the community.

The Gold Coast Pharmacy reflects the historical, cultural, economical and social development trends of Miami. The Gold Coast Pharmacy was the prototype for the development of Biscayne Boulevard as the premier shopping area in Miami. The building represents the low scale, close-to-the-street combination of retail and residential use that was to be featured along much of the boulevard.

5. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

This block-long, extremely narrow building is particularly distinctive for its design. The architects have created an impression of a series of buildings reminiscent of a medieval townscape. The Gold Coast Pharmacy is an exemplary representative of the range of interpretations within the Mediterranean Revival design vocabulary.

6. Is an outstanding work if a prominent designer or builder.

The Gold Coast Pharmacy is an outstanding example of the work of architects C. C. Weber and Alexander Lewis, the team responsible for creating the comprehensive theme for buildings along Biscayne Boulevard, particularly between 1926 and 1928.

7. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment.

The Gold Coast Pharmacy, with its mixed residential and commercial uses, illustrates an approach to urban living that is emulated today for its success in energizing previously decaying areas in center cities.

III. DESCRIPTION

Present and Original Appearance:

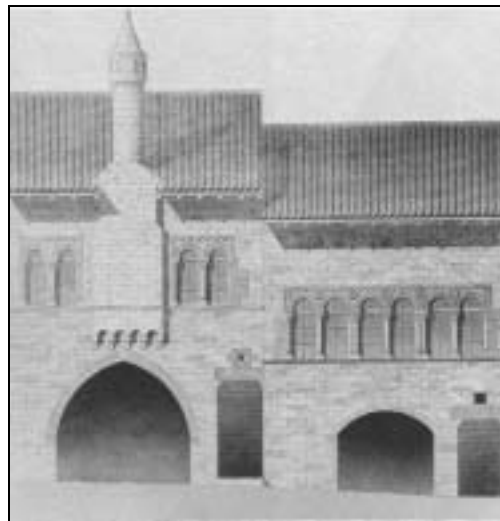
Setting:

The Gold Coast Pharmacy faces west onto Biscayne Boulevard and is located at the southeast corner of NE 25th Street and Biscayne Boulevard. The building occupies 220 feet of frontage on Biscayne Boulevard and has a zero-foot setback. There are no landscape features on the property.

Main Building:

The form of this building is quite unusual in that it is an extremely narrow building that extends a full block, from NE 24th Street on the south to NE 25th Street on the north. The building itself is only 35 feet wide.

This arrangement creates the impression of an arcade on the first story. The narrow dimensions of the building and its emphasis on repeating archway forms in both the first-story arrangement of bays, and the slightly projecting overhang of the second story that is scalloped is almost Medieval in approach (see illustration of a Medieval building below).



From Spiro Kostof, A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals, 1995

Each of the retail bays featured a plate glass window so that merchants could create displays that would be seen by motorists proceeding in both a northerly and southerly direction. There were three apartments on the second floor; each

included a 13 x 24 foot living room, two bedrooms, a bath, dining room and kitchen.

Individual bays of the building are articulated by means of extensive quoining, which is laid in a somewhat irregular pattern around the arched openings to further suggest a more rustic building type. The dramatic length of the building allows the architects to create visual interest by diversifying the treatment of the bays.

The northernmost end of the building features a hipped roof tower. The tower extends beyond the second story and is pierced by round arches supported by freestanding twisted columns. The building then extends southward to a bay that terminates in a shallow pent roof that once featured clay tile but is now clad in asphalt shingles. In the next bay, the building projects forward slightly, and another hipped roof tower element is introduced. Following a second section with a pent roof, the architects introduced a gabled roofed element that is clearly modeled after a residential type, as it features a prominent articulated chimney. The last section repeats the pent roof section, so that they flank the gabled roof element.

All of the original windows, which most likely would have been wooden, double-hung sash or casement types, have been replaced with incompatible aluminum types. However, the original wooden transoms above the windows have survived.

Individual storefronts display a wide variety of signage; however it appears that the location and dimensions of the original storefronts and entrance doorways are still in place. Fabric canopies extend along the west elevation.

The bays of the north and south elevations have been glazed, with treatments customized for the shape of the apertures. The basic form of the building is still maintained despite the enclosure.

Contributing Structures and Landscape Features:

The contributing structure within the site is the Gold Coast Pharmacy building, as described above. There are no contributing landscape features on the site.



Gold Coast Pharmacy
2419-2435 Biscayne Boulevard
North and west façades
2002

IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

Both the retail and residential parts of the building appear to be occupied. However, the storefronts along Biscayne Boulevard have been visually altered by the infilling, different window and door treatments, and incompatible signage. In addition, aluminum windows have replaced the original window type and material. There is, however, a remarkable degree of integrity overall, and these alterations are easily reversible.

Preservation Incentives:

The Gold Coast Pharmacy building is a unique type and design within the City of Miami. It has survived despite a continuing degradation of the Boulevard through the demolition of historic structures and the construction of mediocre replacements.

Because the building is so distinctive, if it were to be rehabilitated, the market for the spaces would be strong. Further, the construction of the new Performing Arts Center at NE 13th Street and Biscayne Boulevard is well underway and the area is seeing an increasing vitality. Should the owners wish to rehabilitate the building, the increased property tax resulting from a higher assessed value could be deferred for a period of 10 years under the Miami-Dade County ad valorem tax incentive ordinance.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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U.S. Department of the Interior/National Park Service. National Register Nomination Form for Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Miami-Dade County, Florida.